

THE SEMANTIC FRAMES OF THE CONTENTS
OF THE *UPĀSANĀKHAṆḌA* OF THE *GAṆEŚA PURĀṆA*

The *Upāsanākhaṇḍa* (*Ukh.*) of the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa* (*GP.*) contains ninety-two chapters of myths and didactic material ostensibly designed to communicate teachings about the god Gaṇeśa. An initial indication of how the composer(s) of the *Ukh.* viewed the purpose of the narrative is given in a brief *anukrāmaṇikā* or statement of contents which is expressed in the form of questions addressed by Vyāsa to Brahmā:

«Who is this Gaṇeśa? What is his real appearance (*svarūpa*) and how can it be known? To whom has he previously been kindly disposed, O Brahmā? How many are his incarnations and what deeds did they perform? Who previously worshipped him and in respect of what deed was he called to mind?» (10,29-30)¹.

We can compare this with the Sūta's statement, found in the last chapter of the *Ukh.*, summarizing what has been narrated in the entire narrative²:

«The worship (*upāsanā*) of Gaṇeśa has been narrated to you in the course of a sequence of many tales» (92,53).

This statement represents a sweeping assessment of the *Ukh.*, but one which, however, englobes the subjects implied by the

1. As well as being a list of contents, the *anukrāmaṇikā* also functions as a guide to readers as to how they should read the text.

2. Unless otherwise indicated the edition I have used is that of Gopal Narayan and Sons (Bombay, 1892). I cite all references from the *Ukh.* by chapter and verse, not by book as there are only two books in the *GP.*

above questions, subjects illustrated in the myths of the *Ukh.*, myths in which it is described how a devotee approaches Gaṇeśa. Whilst both these statements can be read as showing that the composers of the *GP.* envisaged their text as having a substantive didactic purpose, both statements also provide clues as to the meaning of the text, though they do not tell us how this meaning is established through the narrative.

The subjects implied in the series of questions put by Vyāsa in the *anukrāmanikā* can be listed as follows: (1) the identity of Gaṇeśa, (2) Gaṇeśa's physical appearance as an elephant-headed man, (3) the means of perceiving this appearance, (4) Gaṇeśa's favour (*prasāda*), (5) his appearances on Earth as an *avatāra*, (6) his previous worshippers and (7) the deeds he performed in which he gave assistance when prompted by his devotee's recollection (*smaraṇa*) of him. In the construction of the narrative each of these subjects is treated as a theme (a word I use in preference to motif or function as a theme clusters together several of these) which has paradigmatic status within the individual myths of the *Ukh.*³ Each of these themes occurs in combination with the others in the forty separate myths narrated in the *Ukh.*, and between the myths there exists a great variety in content. Accordingly, what the reader/hearer is presented with in the *Ukh.*, is great variability in content and minimum variation in respect of the themes around which the surface contents of the narrative are organized.

These invariant themes are combined on the basis of a plot structure which is the other invariant element which imposes control over the great variability manifest in the contents of the *Ukh.* My purpose in this paper is to define and describe this plot structure and the semantic frames which have shaped it. The semantic frames are a kind of model (though at their most basic they may

3. I use the phrase 'within the individual myth' instead of within the entire narrative of the *Ukh.* Obviously these subjects have a paradigmatic status within the entire narrative as in the myths themselves, but they derive their meaning from their position in the myth's syntagmatic chain, not from that of the *Ukh.*, as a whole. The stylistic and semantic opposition between mythic and didactic narrative (See G.M. BAILEY, *For a New Study of the Vāmana Purāṇa*, «Indo-Iranian Journal», 29 (1986), pp. 9-14), such an important way of contrasting paradigmatic units in the *mahāpurāṇas*, does not apply in the case of the *GP.*

simply be semic oppositions) which are present implicitly in the recitation tradition of the *GP*, which is to say, in the collective minds of the Paurāṇikas who have recited it. It is these frames which implicitly determine the choice of literary material to be incorporated into the Purāṇa, but also how this very material is shaped into the form in which it occurs on the surface of the narrative⁴.

A more specific idea of what I intend by the term semantic frame and how I see them (a) functioning in the construction of the text and (b) as an aid for the analyst's understanding of the text, can be found in some insights I have borrowed from van Dijk and Greimas. The former's notion of macro-structure is relevant to the clarification of the task I have set myself in this article. A macro-structure is

«a theoretical reconstruction of intuitive notions such as 'topic' or 'theme' of a discourse. It explains what is most relevant, important or prominent in the semantic information of the discourse as a whole. At the same time, the macro-structure of a discourse defines its global coherence»⁵.

The macro-structure of the discourse called the *Upāsanākhaṇḍa* consists of a description of the plot structure of each of the myths in the *Ukh.* and the semantic frames which determine this plot structure and are manifested through it. In its surface manifestation this invariant plot structure can be plotted in terms of Propp's functions as he defined them for the Russian folk-tale, but a more concise analytical tool for its plotting is provided by Greimas' actantial theory, and in the first section of this paper I have used this analytical tool to describe the plot structure of the myths of the *Ukh.* The plot structure performs a modelling function in respect of the material determined by the tradition of recitation of the *GP*, to be appropriate for inclusion in the Purāṇa. This

4. This assertion glosses over many problems, such as the origin of the semantic frames, the question of their joint development with that of the recitation tradition of the *GP*, their epistemological status, etc.

5. T. VAN DIJK, *Semantic Discourse Analysis*, in van Dijk, T. (ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 4 volumes, Academic Press, London, 1985, vol. 2, p. 115.

modelling function works to both shape this material and to give cohesion to it in such a way as to illustrate the worship of Gaṇeśa as envisaged in the *anukrāmaṇikā*.

Some of the views of Greimas have also helped to define sharply the problem addressed in this paper. In his book *Sémantique Structurale*, he conceptualizes a text in terms of a universe of immanent rules which are manifested in the narrative and where the relationship between the immanent rules and the manifestation are expressed in the following way:

«En effet, si nous considérons l'univers immanent comme un ensemble de catégories sémiques, la manifestation, prend la forme de la combinatoire de leurs articulations.»⁶

The semantic frames which form the subject of this article correspond to Greimas' semic categories and it is their combination with each other and the mythic plot structure of the *Ukh.* that produces the surface narrative. In this article I isolate and describe these semantic frames (which together form Greimas' 'universe immanent') as separate abstract entities, but it is only in a restricted sense that we can speak about the existence of such frames as individual entities, because though the frames are described as individual entities, they only ever exist implicitly, and then only in conjunction with other semantic frames. However as individual abstract entities they can be construed in two ways for analytical purposes: a) they can be seen as performing a modelling function because they organize literary material and because material can be attached to them insofar as they are structures, b) they can be reconstructed theoretically as models for interpretation which can be applied by the analyst in reading the narrative.

If the definition of a semantic frame as a modelling instrument is problematic, a further problem arises when an attempt is made to define the relationships between semantic

6. A.J. GREIMAS, *Sémantique Structurale*, Paris, Larousse, 1966, p. 108.

frames and how such frames are combined. Yet again Greimas' views have a clarificatory value:

«le problème qui se pose à l'analyste est de savoir comment construire sa propre syntaxe sémantique, qui refléterait, sous forme d'invariants, l'ensemble des jeux syntaxiques qui se jouent, comme autant de variables, sur des paliers hiérarchiques différents»⁷.

The semantic frames of the *Ukh.* can be isolated and described without much difficulty, but the rules which govern their combination into a semantic syntax are much more elusive to discover. Each of the semantic frames I describe consolidates (or 'builds up') the description of a character who manifests an actantial function. It is on the set of actantial categories that the semantic frames depend. The actantial categories are virtually universal in world literature, each category being a reconstruction of the abstract contents of sets of related functions and in a sense they virtually represent universal cultural dispositions which transcend particular cultural boundaries. In the construction of the text these actantial categories are interlinked with the semantic frames and neither could exist without the other, as each implies the other. The semantic frames give further definition to the very general possibilities opened up by the actantial categories, and, given that the semantic frames in the *Ukh.* are culture specific, they invest the narrative manifestations of the actants with a cultural specificity that is denied to the actantial system understood as a theoretically constructed model.

The existence of two distinct categories of semantic frames (as the actantial category is certainly such a frame), one invested with elements of the other implies a hierarchical relationship between all the frames which collectively result in a semantic structure which defines the meaning of the whole text, yet performs the cohesive function in the sense suggested by van Dijk. One might suggest that the actantial system is anterior in terms of text construction to the other semantic frames, but even so it is probably more accurate to specify the relationship between them as one of

7. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

double presupposition, which Greimas and Courtés define as follows:

«...a *double presupposition* (also called *reciprocal presupposition*) is recognized, in which the two terms are at once presupposing and presupposed. The absence of presupposition between two terms gives them back their autonomy. The relation which they will contract between themselves will be then either that of combination, on the syntagmatic axis, or that of opposition, on the paradigmatic axis»⁸.

I consider the actantial system to be presupposed since it is logically anterior to the other semantic frames with which it is linked. However, the actantial system and the semantic frames relate by means of combination on the syntagmatic axis. The other semantic frames, on the contrary, could well relate in terms of opposition on the paradigmatic axis, since they share a common status which marks them off from the actantial system.

The intention of this article is to describe the semantic frames that have shaped the contents of the *Ukh*. But in order to do this I have used as my basic data the myths of the *Ukh*, and in doing so I have worked back from the myths to find the semantic frames. However I am unable to plot a movement in the reverse direction that is, to move from the semantic frames to the meaning of the text considered as a combination of forty separate myths. For most *Purāṇas*, as for any other literary text, the meaning of the text is more than the sum of its individual paradigmatic components. But this condition appears not to apply to the *Ukh*, whose paradigmatic components consist of forty separate myths of variable content but invariable plot structure. If the meaning of each of the myths is determined by the same structural model, which is shaped by identical semantic frames, then all the myths have the same meaning. This conclusion holds, though with one important qualification, even if we consider the global meaning of the *Ukh*, the factor that coheres the entire text and which corresponds to van Dijk's macro-structure, to be that which has shaped the questions put by Vyāsa to Brahmā in the *anukrāmanīkā* and which offers the ans-

8. A.J. GREIMAS and J. COURTÉS, *Semiotics and Language. An Analytical Dictionary*, trans. Crist. L. et al., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 243.

wer, generated by the plot structure present in the myths, to these questions. The qualification is that these questions relate to and are determined by a *bhakti* semantic frame, which I treat in the fourth section of this article, and this suggests that this semantic frame might have precedence over the other two frames (excepting the actantial system) which I describe in this paper. This is a precedence in its influence in establishing meaning within the text. I will return to this problem in the conclusion of this article.

1. *The actantial system in the Ukh.*

The plot of each myth in the *Ukh.* can be first described in terms of the plot boundaries which delimit a very basic plot structure into which other structural elements can easily be fitted. This is a plot structure not exclusive to Purāṇic literature as it has been posited as a deep structure for many different literary genres. Put at its most simple it involves the statement of a lack at the beginning of the myth and the liquidation of this lack at the end of the myth. The action of the principal protagonist, the one who experiences the lack, is directed towards the liquidation of the lack, in the course of which he undergoes a number of major transformations in status, transformations which are defined by the other semantic frames I will describe later. Within this plot structure bounded by lack and liquidation of lack other plots can be embedded and these too can be bounded in the same way⁹.

Despite the generality of this plot structure viewed initially from the perspective of its plot boundaries, and because of this generality, its apparent limited value in producing a precise definition of the plot structure of the myths in the *Ukh.*, it would, nevertheless, be a deficiency in our analysis if this feature were not mentioned since it is such a persistent feature of the myths. It is

9. This does not happen on every occasion. The myth of Kāmanda (7-8), which is embedded in the Somakānta myth (1-9), seems to defy this basic plot. It begins with a portrayal of Kāmanda as lacking for nothing and then pictures him in a steady state of degeneration as the narrative proceeds.

precisely this latter fact which ensures that it is one of the basic defining qualities of these myths.

The existence of these plot boundaries entail other narrative possibilities which are worked out in the myths' plot structure. Two of these are represented in the desire to overcome the lack and the means of overcoming, i.e. of liquidating, the lack. In one sense these can be reduced to the state of different aspects of the same thing, namely, a desire to overcome the lack and the practical expression of this lack. An illustration of this basic plot structure and these narrative possibilities can be found in the Soma-kānta myth which is the first mythical unit in the *Ukh*. It tells the story of King Somakānta who is portrayed as an ideal king, perfect in body and mind, possessing both beautiful wife and obedient son (1,23-2,8). Suddenly he acquires leprosy and his body degenerates to an alarming degree. This is the first indication of the lack he experiences, the lack of a physically perfect body, possession of which is an essential requisite for kingship in ancient India. As a result of his lack he makes a decision to renounce the kingship in favour of his son and enters the forest with his wife. The forest is a very rich symbol in Indian literature and over the centuries has evoked many meanings. In the *Ukh*, it is portrayed as the spatial location (although it is really a symbolic universe) where the means to overcome the lack is found. Almost without exception the word for 'means' is *upāya* (to be translated as 'means', 'way or strategem' depending on the context) and characters such as Somakānta request an *upāya* from a sage they meet in the forest. Somakānta meets Bhṛgu (6,1-6) and requests an *upāya* from him, a request to which the sage promptly accedes (6,26-29). Once this *upāya* is enacted then the lack can be liquidated, but as I will note later, the application of the *upāya* not only changes the state of the experiencier of the lack in the sense of liquidating his lack, it also alters his state in terms of whether or not he is a devotee of Gaṇeśa. The implication here is that the particular lack described in the narrative is matched by an implied lack — this being that he is not a devotee of Gaṇeśa — a lack which is made explicit when after the liquidation of his initial explicit lack he becomes a devotee of Gaṇeśa.

The *upāya* is always given by a sage and usually takes the form

of a mantra that is to be recited in Gaṇeśa's presence. In the myths in the *Ukh.* the sage is a mediating figure who regulates the initial contact between the character who experiences the lack and the character who removes the lack. Each of these narrative elements — experiencer of the lack, mediator, remover of the lack and the means of removing the lack — are invariant elements in the myth and lend themselves to analysis in terms of the actantial system developed by Greimas¹⁰. He postulates six actantial categories which are really abstracts models of action which unite conceptually a cluster of roles as they occur in a literary text. The actantial categories form a system and between the six elements of this system there are implied relationships, which become explicit on the surface of the text. In the *Ukh.* the six categories and the boundaries of the plot — lack and its liquidation — make up the elements of the plot and the relationships between all these elements constitute the syntax of the plot, though, of course they have a semantic function as well¹¹.

Greimas begins his description of actantial categories with what he calls Subject and Object and suggests that the appropriate semantic unit (or sememe) which realizes the relationship between them is that of 'desire' and writes that they 'sont capables de produire des récits-occurrences où le désir sera manifesté sous sa forme à la fois pratique et mythique de 'quête'¹². In the Somakānta myth [M1] these two actantial categories are manifested in the following way¹³:

Subject = man with deformed body = Somakānta

Object = attainment of perfect body = Gaṇeśa.

The two narrative manifestations of the Subject and Object actants (henceforth mS. and mO.) are presented here as a man and a god

10. See GREIMAS, *Sémantique Structurale*, pp. 172-192.

11. It is possible that the plot boundaries of lack and liquidation of lack should really be regarded as subordinate to the actantial system insofar as each boundary is really a description of the state of the character who manifests the actantial category of Subject.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

13. The notations M (Myth) 1, EM6 (Embedded Myth 6) correspond to my own set of contents determined for the *Ukh.*

respectively. In the myths of the *Ukh.* mS. is always the figure in the myth who experiences the lack, and who, undertakes a quest for the Object, which is the liquidation of the lack. However, mO. is always represented in a bifurcated manner in the myths. On the one hand it is expressed in the liquidated lack and even in the possibility of the lack being liquidated, something that is implied as soon as the lack is experienced. On the other hand in all the myths Gaṇeśa can be postulated as mO. as he is the figure who must be sought out by the mS. — made known to the mS. by the Helper (mH.). As soon as this knowledge is known to the mS., Gaṇeśa becomes the explicit object of the quest. It might be objected that Gaṇeśa's role is really that of mH., of acting as a helper to mS., but in these myths that role is always manifested by another figure who guides mS. to Gaṇeśa.

The actantial categories of Sender and Receiver also organize the activities of the main actors in the myths of the *Ukh.* An equation which summarizes correspondences between these actantial categories immediately suggests itself and is portrayed in the following diagram:

Subject = Sender and Receiver

Object = Sender and Receiver

where the Object is always Gaṇeśa when viewed from this perspective. Similarly, the Subject is always manifested as a devotee of Gaṇeśa, for it is only in this role that he can manifest, at different times in the narrative roles, associated with the actantial categories of Sender (mSe) and Receiver (mR). To use the example of M1. again, the mS. Somakānta is mR. in the sense that he receives back [really is given back as a boon] his leprosy-free body after he has made a resolution (9,23) to hear a recitation of the *GP*. His restored body is therefore a result of the merit accrued from hearing a devotional text, but ultimately the merit comes from Gaṇeśa as it is his text which is being recited, the hearing of which is an act of devotion. As this act of devotion is directed towards Gaṇeśa, so it makes Somakānta an mS., just as Gaṇeśa is an mS. in causing Somakānta to receive back his previously untarnished body and an mR in receiving Somakānta's devotion.

Although initially the mS. acts in such a way as to directly liquidate the lack, his effort is later directed towards gaining ac-

ceptance as a devotee of Gaṇeśa, and this makes the liquidation of his lack a side issue, though his becoming a devotee of Gaṇeśa entails liquidation of the lack. A clear illustration of this is provided in EM12 which is the *GP*. transformation of the well-known Indra/Ahalyā myth. Here Indra's initial lack is his unfulfilled lust for Ahalyā, a lack which is quickly liquidated when he assumes the appearance of her husband Gautama in order to deceive her into having intercourse with him. This is only the initial lack and its liquidation in a series of lacks and their liquidations, but it serves as the cause of Indra's lack. This lack, a deformed body, is one of the most common in the types of lacks that occur in the *Ukh*. It occurs when after returning to his hermitage and finding Ahalyā with Indra, Gautama curses him to have a deformed body containing one thousand vaginas (31,24-28). When he is cursed Indra disappears and the gods, experiencing a lack because Indra, their king, is absent, plead with Gautama to return Indra to his normal condition (32,13-29). Gautama is eventually persuaded and teaches a six-syllable Gaṇeśa mantra to Bṛhaspati who in turn teaches it to Indra who recites it and recovers his normal body. When this happens his own lack is liquidated as well as that of the gods. That mS. and mO. should manifest the actants of Receiver and Sender in a myth like this is inevitable because of the *bhakti* semantic framework which has interacted with the actantial system to produce the myth as we have it.

Greimas' final two actantial categories are those of Helper and Obstacle (mOb)¹⁴. The category of Helper covers functions 'qui consistent à apporter l'aide en agissent dans le sens du désir, ou en facilitant la communication'¹⁵. In the *Ukh*. the most frequent manifestation of this actant is to be found in the sages (Bhṛgu, Na-

14. GREIMAS, *ibid.*, p. 179 makes the following assessment of these two actants: «A qui frappe aussi, c'est le caractère secondaire de ces deux derniers actants. En jouant un peu sur les mots on pourrait dire, en pensant à la forme participiale par laquelle nous les avons désignés, qu'il s'agit là de 'participants' circonstanciels, et non de vrai actants de spectacle». This certainly holds true for the *Ukh*., where because of the influence of the *bhakti* semantic framework, it is the Subject and Object actantial categories which are of greatest influence on the realization of the myth and subsume beneath themselves the other four actantial categories.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

rada, Viśvāmitra and Mudgala, to name a few) who play roles designed to enable mS. to attain mO. It is the sage who provide the *upāya* which will facilitate communication with Gaṇeśa in his manifestation as the Object. In M1. the appearance of Bhṛgu marks the entrance of the mH. (6,3-30) and after he has told Somakānta the reason for his acquisition of a leprous body he tells (9,2-3) him that for all forms of evil he has the remedies¹⁶. But if the sage manifests the Helper actant so too does the *upāya* itself as it is the instrument, communicated by the mH., by means of which mS. demonstrates his devotion to Gaṇeśa, an act which leads to the liquidation of his lack.

Finally there is the actant which covers the category of Obstacle. It conveys functions qui... consistent à créer des obstacles, en s'opposant soit à la réalisation du désir, soit à la communication de l'objet¹⁷. The principal manifestation of this actant in the myths of the *Ukh.* is found in the figure of mS. himself. This is because the mS's previously acquired *karma* is both a cause of his lack and an obstacle to a clearing of this lack. Somakānta in M1. loses his excellent appearance because of evil acts committed in previous lives. Previously he had been a thief and murderer named Kāmanda, a person who in old age built a temple in which the brahmins placed an image of Gaṇeśa, thereby accruing some merit for himself. When Kāmanda finally died he was offered a choice by Yama as to whether he would enjoy his merit or his evil first (8,28). Choosing the former he was born as King Somakānta. However, the evil he had accrued was required to be worked out and this is why a leprous body was visited upon Somakānta. The evil of this previous life is only drawn out when it is negated by an equal amount of merit, an amount produced when Bhṛgu (9,4) recites eighteen of Gaṇeśa's names. In this case mS. is the mO. to his own quest even though he is unaware of being a hindrance to what he wishes to attain.

Other variations of this are found in those cases where the

16. See 9.2,
kva papā nikarāste tu kvopāyaḥ kathitā mayā /
tathāpy ekaṃ bravīmi tvām upāyam aghanāśanam//

17. GREIMAS, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

figure who experiences the lack, and is thereby acting in the role of Subject, expresses arrogance about the ease with which he can achieve a certain goal and due to his arrogance loses his capacity to achieve that goal. In such cases his incapacity becomes the lack and the liquidation of the lack occurs when he regains his capacity to do what he had originally wished to do. The beginning of M3, which details Vyāsa's attempts to compose the Purāṇa provide an example of this:

«After he had divided the Vedas into four portions in order to facilitate the understanding of their meaning, he began to compose the Purāṇa, arrogantly conceited about his own knowledge. But he had not first performed any auspicious ceremony, nor any act of obeisance, nor any eulogy to Gaṇeśa or anyone else for the purpose of bringing about its completion. Then, being overcome by hindrances, he could not recollect any purpose at all...» (10,2-4ab).

He then goes to Brahmā, who manifests the role of Helper and explains why the hindrances have arisen and what he must do in order to get rid of them¹⁸.

A word of summary about what I have said in this section. The plot of each of the myths in the *Ukh.* is bounded by a lack and its liquidation, and within these boundaries a drama unfolds where the interaction of the principal actors can be categorized as manifestations of actantial categories in the form developed by Greimas and in this method of conceptualization the notions of lack and liquidation of lack, notions originally borrowed from Propp, can easily be correlated with Greimas' Subject and Object actants. These actantial categories are reconstructed abstractions of various expressions of a common role and it is through these roles that the characters in the mythic plot traverse the mythic narrative itself. The actantial system defines both a semantic and a syntactic system of roles insofar as these constitute the plot structure of the myth. By defining the individual elements (the actants) of the system and the interrelations between them, it defines a syntactic system at its most basic level, because the principles of interrelationship between the actant function as combinatorial principles.

18. Cfr. EM5 (13,31ff.) and M39 (89,35ff.) for further examples where the arrogance occurs in Brahmā and Śeṣa respectively.

But equally this particular configuration of elements and the roles themselves act as a semantic system that shapes the material which is subject to it. If however, we were to define the semantic value of the myths of the *Ukh.* only in terms of roles defined as actantial categories we would seriously understate the richness of meaning in the myth. Only by analysing the other semantic frames which interlink with the actantial system can we describe the full meaning of these mythic narratives.

2. Semantic Framework (1): *Karmavipāka*

The notion of *karmavipāka* or 'the ripening of *karma*' is one of crucial importance in the *GP.* and in the *Ukh.* the word itself occurs as early as chapter 2,2. As one would expect, throughout the *Ukh.* the notion that *karma* is the cause of the life situation of many characters is universal, but the implications of *karma* are only expressed through mS. over a sequence of two or more myths which can be defined as one narrative (and semantic) unit under the title of *karmavipāka* myth. Such a sequence consists of what I have called an 'embedded myth' and an 'embedding myth' where the factor that gives them cohesion is the *karmavipāka* notion and where the 'embedding myth' is a myth in its own right to the extent that it shares the same plot structure as the other myths in the *Ukh.* Both 'embedding' and 'embedded' myth have a clear logical relationship between them, a relationship which is one of reciprocity as it is only possible to speak of a myth as a *karmavipāka* myth when both parts run together consecutively and are necessary for the meaning of the whole. Of the twenty-five myths in the *Ukh.* which I have identified as 'embedded' myths nine are part of *karmavipāka* myths and they describe the previous life of mS. who in the embedding myth manifests the Subject who experiences the lack. In describing this character's previous existence they always lay down the reason for the occurrence of the lack.

For the sake of clarity I have schematized the diachronic phases of the typical *karmavipāka* myth as it appears on the surface of the narrative:

Introduction	<i>Vipāka</i>	Meeting with Helper	description of <i>karma</i> producing life	<i>upāya</i>	Conclusion
1	2	3	4	5	6

The first section constitutes the introduction to the myth and describes the initial, pre-lack, situation of the character who manifests the Subject actant. In M1 and M7, for instance, two kings named Somakānta and Bhīma respectively, are portrayed as ideal kings by the standards of ancient India. Then the location of their kingdoms is described as are their wives. The second section describes the ripening (*vipāka*) of *karma* which has been accrued in previous lives, the ripening being identical with the lack experienced by the character who manifests the Subject. In the case of M1 this section covers Somakānta's discovery of his own leprous body and his decision to renounce his kingdom in favour of his son, thereafter to enter the forest with his wife (2,2-5,24). In M7 this section covers Bhīma's resolve to renounce his kingship and enter the forest as a result of his capacity to produce a son (19,9-23). If in this section it is unclear to the experiencer of the lack precisely what caused the lack to occur, it is made clear in the third or fourth section of the *karmavipāka* myth that the actions, the ripening of which is described in section two, are described in either of these sections. Sometimes in section two the character who experiences the lack attributes it to the influence of evil performed in a previous life, thereby foreshadowing what will be narrated in section four. Indeed, the narrative logic of the *karmavipāka* myth requires the inclusion of a narrative section which presents mS. as the producer of *karma*.

Section three of the *karmavipāka* myth covers the meeting with mH., Bhṛṅgu and Viśvāmitra respectively in M1 and M7. It is characterized by extensive description of the relevant sage (or occasionally a god, but always an exalted being who stands outside of the problem being addressed) which is designed in part to draw out the qualities that distinguish the experiencer of the lack from the sage. But it also contains a dialogue between the representatives of these two actants where the person experiencing the lack is told why the lack has arisen and the way it can be overcome.

Section four comprises the mH's description of the actions

performed in a prior life that have directly produced the lack as narrated in section two. This description is presented in the text as a myth (*pūrvajanmakathām*, 7,7; *pūrvakathām*, 19,36) in its own right. In M1 the myth (EM2) which tells of Somakānta's previous life is narrated over two chapters, so it only takes up about twenty-five percent of the complete narrative of M1. On the contrary there are two embedded myths (EM8 and EM9) in M7 and their extent in the total narrative of M7 is such that it really becomes just a frame myth for EM8¹⁹. The existence of this section as an independent myth, having a relationship of reciprocity with the embedding myth, serves to truncate the narrative of the entire *karmavipāka* narrative. More precisely it truncates the 'embedding myth'. This is necessary from a narrative point of view in a myth dictated by a semantic frame based on *karmavipāka*, the requirements of which require both a *vipāka* section and a *karma* accrual section where it is only consistent for the latter section to be presented as a separate narrative unit from the 'embedding myth' since it represents a rupture (past into present) of the temporal framework of the 'embedding myth'. But in dividing the 'embedding myth' into parts it also functions as a stylistic device for emphasizing the respective transformations which mark the movement throughout the myth. At the most elementary level it separates that part where mS. moves from a state of possessing no lack to one where he possesses a lack, whereas in the second part the reverse transformation occurs. But more dramatically it divides the first section of the 'embedding myth' which portrays mS. as a non-devotee from the second section where he becomes a devotee.

The fifth section of the *karmavipāka* myth covers the receipt and application of the *upāya* which is almost always a *mantra* and is recited after certain austerities have been performed. It marks a change in the experiencer of the lack from being a figure who passively accepts the influence of *karma* to one who actively intervenes to influence his own *karma*.

The sixth section is a conclusion which narrates two main

19. M7 comprises the sixty-four *ślokas* of 19,4-40 and 26,30-27,26, whereas EM8 comprises two hundred *ślokas* between 19,40 and 26,29 and EM9 ninety-four *ślokas* from 22,7-23,44.

events. Firstly, there is a description of a confrontation between Gaṇeśa and mS., a confrontation marked by Gaṇeśa's performance of a *darśana*, his offer of a boon to mS., a boon which will liquidate mS's lack and a statement of devotion by mS. towards Gaṇeśa. Secondly, it is marked by the liquidation of the lack, hence the annulment of the effect of the bad *karma* on mS., and the mS.'s reaction to this which is usually to build a temple in honour of Gaṇeśa.

If the preceding few pages describe the surface arrangement of a myth viewed from the perspective of a hypothetical *karmavipāka* semantic frame, how then does this frame work? The best way to determine this is to isolate areas of the myth where its influence can be discerned and there are at least four such areas. Firstly, at the level of complete mythic units it is one determinant of the phenomenon of 'myth embedding', that is, its manifestation in a narrative form demands embedding. Here the semantic function shades into a syntactic function since the plot structure of the *karmavipāka* myth demands the conflation of two conceivably separate narratives, but it does provide semantic justification for their combination. Secondly, it establishes a particular temporal referent which explicitly distinguishes *karmavipāka* myths from non-*karmavipāka* myths, though it should be noted that there is considerable evidence to suggest that a similar temporal referent is implicit in the latter. This temporal referent demands of us that we read the *karmavipāka* myth as operating in respect of two internal chronological schemes illustrated in the following diagrams:

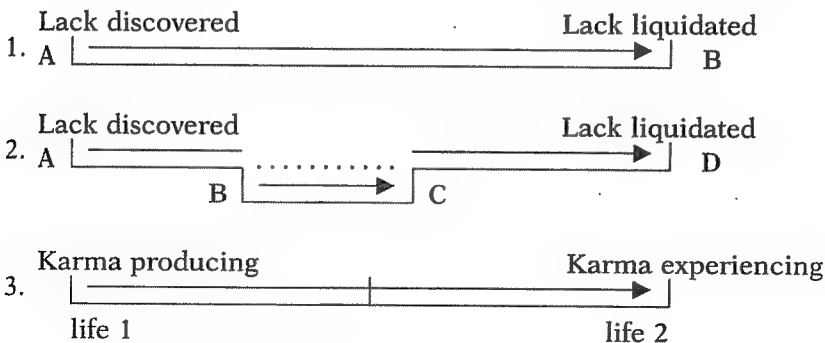


Diagram one charts the basic temporal referent pertinent to the plots of all the myths in the *Ukh.*, including the *karmavipāka* myth, and does so on the assumption of a time referent which starts from a hypothetical point A, continuing unbroken to point B. The second diagram represents the *karmavipāka* myth proper, and differs only that it contains two internal temporal referents, A-D which pertains to the present life of mS., and B-C which pertains to his previous life. Both of these represent a depiction of time in a horizontal sense restricted to consecutive events. So too does diagram three, though here too the depiction has a vertical sense insofar as the diagram charts the karmic history of mS. over two lives, the minimum time that would be required to present this dimension of a person's development. To give some idea of the differences between what is represented in diagrams one and three, if the first was superimposed on the third it would cover only part of the 'life 2' section of this diagram.

A third area of influence of the *karmavipāka* semantic frame pertains to the characters who manifest the actantial categories, as it invests them with particular meaning. The character who is mS. is made into both a '*karma* producer' and a '*karma* experiencer', both of these being abstract categories in themselves but which come to the surface in the depiction of mS. in sections two and four of the *karmavipāka* myth. It is in the depiction of mS. that these two categories have had their most productive influence, but other categories are also found. In the figure of mO. we find a '*karma* remover' (in the sense that he can negate the influence of bad *karma* through his inexhaustible merit) and in that of mH. we find a '*karma* knower' (or a '*karma* explainer' might be a more accurate designation) because he is capable of telling mS. about his previous *karma*. One could further subdivide these categories on the basis of whether the *karma* in question is good or bad *karma*, but this is still dependent upon the opposition that underlies all these categories: *karma* experiencer (mS) v '*non-karma* experiencer' (mO, mH).

The conceptual opposition between good and bad *karma* just mentioned is a fourth area where the *karmavipāka* semantic frame has been productive in shaping the manifestations of the actantial categories, but in this case primarily mS. As it occurs in the myths

this conceptual opposition can initially be presented in two categories:

1. *punya* v *papa*
2. *dhanya* v *viphala*

These four words and the concepts they designate occur dozens of times in the *Ukh.* and though there is a strong temptation because of their similarity to collapse them back into one, their occurrences in the myths suggest that they cover different phenomena, although some overlapping does occur. The first opposition classifies actions, usually those performed in the past, as meritorious or evil, and views actions as substantive things, the effects of which are stored up and will ripen in a later life. When they are referred to by mS. they represent judgements on actions performed in the past that have produced present life situations. So in EM15 a certain King Kardama whose present life has been opulent with good fortune asks Bhrgu what he was in a previous birth and what good deed he had performed (*sukṛtaṃkṛtam*, 51,53) that would produce such wealth²⁰. And in EM18, Nala, who was in a similar situation to Kadarma, asks Gautama whether the wealth he possesses was due to merit or tapas (*kenapunyaena tapasāpivā* 53,20). Finally, in 22,3 Somakanta asks by what merit Dakṣa had acquired a divine body and whether he was released from some evil (*saṃjātaḥ kena puṇyena mukto vāpātakātkutaḥ*) due to which his previous body had been deformed.

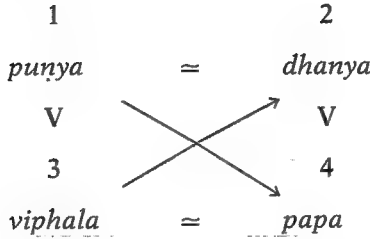
The second opposition is found in reference to judgements made by individuals about a particular event that has just occurred and which they have witnessed. Contrary to what is judged to be *punya* or *pāpa*, these judgments are always made about events that have occurred in the immediate present. The most common type of event that is considered to be 'auspicious' is a *darśana* of a sage or Gaṇeśa²¹. An example of a negative reaction to an event occurs

20. Cfr. 53,57, where he asks what *karma* had caused his present situation to occur and what it is that is meritorious (*puṇyam*).

21. See 20,38; 23,19; 35,20; 35,32 etc.

when in M7 Bhīma, reacting to not having a son, describes his own mother, birth, father, house, wealth and family to be useless (*vrthā*, 19,12) and says that all activity is fruitless (*viphalaṃsakalaṃ-karma*) when one is without a son.

A synchronic presentation of these conceptual oppositions is given below:



The purpose of this diagram is to show that though one and two and three and four form conceptual pairs, the components of these pairs are functionally different in the myths. In the course of the myth three becomes two and four becomes one, because Gaṇeśa turns evil into merit and his manifestation through the medium of a *darśana* turns a worthless situation into one that is auspicious.

The conceptual oppositions that occur in this diagram are worked through explicitly in the mythic plots of the *karmavipāka* myths, but given that most characters — even the gods — in most Purāṇic texts are '*karma* producers' and '*karma* experiencers', the entire system of oppositions is implicit (and sometimes explicit) present in the myths whose narrative sequence is not characterized by *karmavipāka*. But because of their clarity in presenting the effects of *karma* over more than one life the *karmavipāka* myths are an interpretative frame for all the other myths where *karma* is an implied constant influencing the careers of the actors in the myths.

3. Semantic Frame (2): Gaṇeśa's Family Relations

The most immediately apparent surface manifestation of this semantic frame is found in the set of myths, common in the *maha-*

purāṇas, where Gaṇeśa's birth from Pārvatī and his subsequent interrelations with Śiva and Pārvatī are narrated. In these myths the following principal events are treated: Gaṇeśa's birth from some residue (sweath, etc.) of Pārvatī's body, his role as Pārvatī's doorkeeper, his protection of her from Śiva and receipt of an elephant's head. Apart from the treatment of these subjects what is most striking about these myths are the three sets of relationships that operate in them, those between Pārvatī and Gaṇeśa, Śiva and Gaṇeśa and Pārvatī and Śiva. Gaṇeśa's relationship with his father, Śiva, is marked by distance, tension and, eventually, violence, whereas that with his mother is marked by closeness and tenderness. Here is how these two sets of interrelationships are seen in a new book on Gaṇeśa by Courtright:

«After Gaṇeśa's arrival, the myth evokes the playful intimacy and warmth between the mother and her newly created son, an intimacy enjoyed while the father remains at a distance. Eventually the mother must let the son go; the son must confront the father and compete with him for access to the mother. In this conflict the son does not stand a chance against the father's overwhelming strength»²².

As far as it goes this statement accurately conveys the changing relationship between Gaṇeśa and his respective parents over the diachronic development of the set of myths about his birth. It does not however sufficiently acknowledge the nature of the relationship between Pārvatī and Śiva which in these myths is wholly determined by the attitude each has towards Gaṇeśa himself and which begins with hostility and distance, concluding with tenderness and closeness.

Just as in these Gaṇeśa myths, the triad of father, mother and son (never daughter) defines the identity of a basic set of characters that forms one element in the social grouping of actors in many of the myths in the *Ukh*. Provisionally we could describe this social grouping of the myths in terms of four elements: (1) the family group around mS., (2) mH, (3) Gaṇeśa (mO) and (4) all other characters who play incidental roles in the myths. Whilst the

22. P. COURTRIGHT, *Gaṇeśa: Lord of Obstacles Lord of Beginnings*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985, p. 103. Many of the relevant myths are summarized on pp. 41-62.

triad of father, mother and son is not reflected in every myth in the *Ukh.* it occurs in enough of them to be acknowledged as reflecting a deep semantic frame which has produced this triad around which is grouped various material which embellishes the basic mythic plot of these myths. This semantic frame operates as three sets of oppositions: father/son, mother/son and father/mother. The set of variations which define the relationship between these groups can be described as distance/closeness, hostility/tenderness and contempt/respect. In the Gaṇeśa myths, after Gaṇeśa's birth, mother and son relate in terms of closeness and tenderness, father and son and father and mother relate in terms of hostility and distance. When, however, as occurs after Gaṇeśa's confrontation with Śiva, father and mother relate in terms of closeness and tenderness, the relationship between both father and mother as a group and son is one of respect and distance.

The myths in the *Ukh.* which contain this triad differ from the Gaṇeśa myths to the extent that the variations in the relationships between the two sides of the three oppositions just suggested are much more flexible than those which operate in the latter. For example, in M11 and M12 (27,29-29,25; 35,1-38,48) the relationship between the social (as opposed to biological) father, Vācakanavi, and son, Gṛtsamada is characterized by tenderness, whereas that between son and mother, Mukundā, is characterized by hostility. In M1. the relationship between father and mother as a group and son is at first characterized by closeness and tenderness, but as the myth progresses it passes through latent conflict to a condition of distance and respect. Finally, in EM35 (76) the father, Dūrva, and mother, Śākinī, have a son named Yamajani who relates to them (and his own wife) always with hostility, distance and contempt.

Before giving examples of the narrative manifestation of this semantic frame one further point must be raised. Where has this semantic frame come from which has been so productive in shaping this particular element in the social organization of the myths in the *Ukh.*? My contention is that it has been somehow implicitly developed from the triadic relationship that dominates the social organization of the Gaṇeśa myths. I am not perceiving this in terms of historical dependence of the *Ukh.* myths on the Gaṇeśa myths, rather I am suggesting that the surface manifestation of the

social organization in the Gaṇeśa myths is taken up as a deep semantic frame for the *Ukh.* myths. It may of course be the case that beneath both sets of myths the same semantic frame of oppositions of actors and attitudes, mentioned above, has been at work, and that this is ultimately independent of both sets of myths. Even if this is so there is one undeniable piece of evidence that connects both sets of myths over and above this common semantic frame. That is, that within the triadic grouping the motif of disfigurement and the resultant 'disempowerment' (in the sense of loss of status and position by the disfigured person) is very common. Gaṇeśa's decapitation, on which this motif has been based, is not followed slavishly in the *Ukh.* myths, rather it has been productive of disfigurement in a very general sense (i.e. by disease [leprosy], deformation at birth or disfigurement by curse). In addition, it is not just a son, as it is a Gaṇeśa's case, who is disfigured. But whatever the differences this motif of disfigurement is such a persistent feature of both not to have arisen by coincidence.

Of all the possible variations in the relationship that are available to regulate the relationships between members of the triad, conflict is the one most marked in the myths. One example is found in EM8 where, after much effort, King Vallabha and his wife Kamalā eventually produce a son called Dakṣa whose body is badly deformed (19,41). After twelve years of effort to rectify his son's condition, Vallabha becomes depressed and banishes his wife and son to the forest. The son and wife live from her begging until after many adventures Dakṣa is finally made whole again as a result of gaining a celestial body from Gaṇeśa²³. This myth follows the standard pattern set by the Gaṇeśa/Śiva/Pārvatī myth and reveals distance and tension between father, on the one hand, and mother and son, on the other hand. Between mother and son

23. This disfigurement and its removal (through the acquisition of a celestial body) could also be understood from the perspective of the scheme of lack and its liquidation. No doubt this is a valid perspective for the Dakṣa myth, as well as in several other myths in which the triadic social organization is important, but there are other myths (e.g. M11 and M12) where this scheme would be inappropriate as a means of understanding the disfigurement. It is likely that the motif of disfigurement arises from a different semantic frame than that which gives us lack and its liquidation.

there exists closeness and affection. A further examples comes from EM9, which is really the '*karma* producing' section of the *karmavipāka* myth where EM8 forms the *vipāka* section. Here the triad is formed by a *vaiśya* named Kalyāṇa, his wife Indumatī and their son Ballāla. The latter is a devotee of Gaṇeśa and every day takes the other young boys of the village into the forest to worship Gaṇeśa. Their fathers complain that this is making the boys weak in body and so they put great pressure on Kalyāṇa to stop Ballāla from taking their sons to the forest. Kalyāṇa beats him and in the process he disfigures (22,28ff.) his body, ties him to a tree and taunts Gaṇeśa to come and free him. Gaṇeśa does come, restores his body to its original form (22,43) and gives power to a curse that Ballāla places on Kalyāṇa that he should become blind, deaf-mute and a hunchback. When this curse takes effect, Indumatī comes into the forest to find her son, embraces him with affection and defends her husband's beating of him, saying that this was done in accord with *dharma*. Then she asks him to devise a remedy for the disfigurement of Kalyāṇa, on the grounds that he is still his father to whom he should be loyal. However, he refuses claiming that Gaṇeśa is the real father of all of them. Here father and son are in conflict, but not through an overstressing of the son's links with his mother, even though it is clear that he is closer to his mother than to his father. She is closer to her husband than her son. Note too that the son's disfigurement is visited back upon the father but with a much more pronounced effect. The triadic framework exists here but it is invested with a quite different meaning than that found in the Gaṇeśa myths.

Other than these examples which in a very obvious way reflect the triadic relationship, there are others where the same relationship has influenced the interaction of the main characters in the mythic plot, but in a more subtle way. One of these occurs in M11 and M12 (27,27-29,25; 35,1-38,48) where the principal characters are Rukmāṅgada, son of King Bhīma, Mukundā, wife of the sage Vācaknavi and Gr̥tsamada, Mukundā's son by Indra in the guise of Rukmāṅgada. One day after being made king, Rukmāṅgada goes hunting in the forest where he encounters Mukundā, the passionate wife of the sage Vācaknavi. She tries to seduce him (28,5ff.), and when he angrily rejects her she curses him (17-20) and he

becomes a leper. Eventually Rukmāṅgada recovers his own body after he bathes in a *tīrtha* sacred to Gaṇeśa. After this he returns to his own kingdom and in doing so he brings happiness to his parents. Now the narrative returns to Mukundā, telling how Indra comes to her in the form of Rukmāṅgada and has intercourse with her as a result of which a son named Ṛṭsamada is born. When Vācaknavi returns he thinks Ṛṭsamada is his son and brings him up as a brāhmaṇical ascetic even though his paternity is that of a kṣatriya. On one occasion when some other sages question his eligibility to be considered a sage, because they believe him to be born from Rukmāṅgada, a *kṣatriya*, he asks his mother about his true origin. She reveals the truth to him and in anger he curses her to become a thorn in fruit found in the forest. Accusing him of cruelty, she places a counter-curse on him, laying down that his own son will be more cruel than him. Eventually after Gaṇeśa's intervention, Ṛṭsamada gains a certain acceptance by other sages and eventually produces a son, the demon Tripura.

This myth is made complicated by the complexities surrounding Ṛṭsamada's paternity. Indra is his biological father, Vācaknavi is the father who raises him and Rukmāṅgada is his father in the eyes of his biological mother. The result of this paternity is that Ṛṭsamada is held by his brāhmaṇical peers to be of mixed-caste and has to resort to Gaṇeśa in order to gain their acceptance. Accordingly, the relationship with his parents is not the main problem raised in the myth, though it is the cause of his own misunderstanding (through no fault of his own) about his proper caste. The main problem relates to the conundrum of living like a brahmin whilst being of mixed-caste. Notwithstanding this conundrum, social relations in the myth are centred on the triadic relationship of the original Gaṇeśa myths. Ṛṭsamada is close to his foster father, totally removed from his biological father and expresses an attitude of distance and disgust towards his mother. A further parallel to the Gaṇeśa myth is found in the disfiguring of Mukundā, which represents a double reversal from the situation as found in the Gaṇeśa myth for instead of a son being disfigured by the father for being too close to his mother, the mother is disfigured by the son, for being deceitful about the identity of his true father.

In concluding this section, I would restate the view that the principal influence of this particular semantic frame is to establish one of the four social elements in the myth as a triadic 'kin nucleus'²⁴. It is around these elements, each of which is in some way associated with a manifestation of a particular actant, that the drama of the mythic plot unfolds. In conjunction with the semantic frame discussed in the previous section, this one also shaped the narrative image of mS. Wherever the triadic grouping occurs mS. is one of the group and his role in the myth is in part determined by how he acts in regard to the other two members of the group. Because not every mS. in the *Ukh.* is part of such a triadic grouping, the influence of this semantic frame can be said to define the mS. who is part of this triad as one possible paradigmatic expression of the Subject actant, in contrast to other expressions of the mS. who do not participate in such a grouping.

Finally, I said earlier that the myths of the *Ukh.* which contain this triadic grouping show, within the boundaries of the permissible set of attitudes exemplified in the Gaṇeśa myths, a much greater flexibility concerning the pairs of members of the triad between whom these attitudes can be expressed than occurs in the Gaṇeśa myths. So if I am correct in assuming the Gaṇeśa myths to be the source of the semantic frame that produces this triadic grouping, it might be also correct, on the one hand, to consider the role models in these myths as an implied invariant against which the roles of the triadic groups in the *Ukh.* can be seen as a set of variant forms. On the other hand, the roles of this same group also seem to rest on another implied normative view governing the behaviour of members of the family towards one another, normative insofar as this view is laid down in the Dharmaśāstras²⁵. This then represents another implied invariant against which all

24. This is Brenda Beck's term. See her article *The Kin Nucleus in Tamil Folklore*, in T. TRAUTMAN, ed., *Kingship and History in South Asia*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan, 1974, pp. 1-27.

25. This is not always implicit. See 2,28-30 where Somakānta makes appeal to the *dharmā* of a son's duty in order to make his son take the throne when he himself is about to set off for the forest. Cfr. 25,20-22 where Indumatī makes appeal to dharmic rules, concerning a father's right to beat his son, in order to justify Kalyāṇa's beating of Ballāla.

the variant forms of behaviour as exhibited in the myths, and which reflect the true history (albeit in an exaggerate form) of family relationships in the Indian 'kin nucleus', can be measured. It is the tension between these invariant and variant forms that helps evoke the dramatic quality of the myths.

4. Semantic Framework (3): The Bhakti Semantic System

In an unpublished manuscript I have presented the reconstruction of an abstract literary model which is derived from what I have called a *bhakti* semantic framework and which imposes a particular set of transformations onto a set of contents, which includes both mythic and didactic material, to produce what I there called a *bhakti* text²⁶. One of the dominant features of this model and one with a direct relevance to the myths in the *Ukh.* is the formal representation of the transformation that takes place when the status of a person changes from that of non-devotee to devotee in respect of a particular object of devotion. This transformation can be divided into nine stages which are manifested in the mythic narrative as nine separate functions (understood in a Proppian sense). Not all of these functions are found in every one of the myths in the *Ukh.*, but in all these myths the mS. does undergo a transformation in status from non-devotee to devotee of Gaṇeśa, just as the mO. (= Gaṇeśa) changes from being perceived as a non-bhakti god to being perceived as a *bhakti* god. Liquidation of the lack of mS. is part of the result signalled at the end of each myth. Transformation of mS.'s status is the other result²⁷.

26. See G.M. BAILEY, *The Semantic of Bhakti in the Vāmana Purāṇa* (forthcoming in RSO), and for a summary see my article *For a New Study of the Vāmana Purāṇa*, III, 29 (1986), p. 11.

27. Using different terminology, Courtright, when concluding his discussion of psychological themes in the career of Gaṇeśa in mythology, makes a similar point about the transformation of the potential devotee. He writes (p. 122):

«The theological message of the Śiva/Gaṇeśa, *ācārya/brahmacārin*, father/son pattern can be summarized in this way: submit that you may be saved, be destroyed that you may be made whole. The sacrificial violence is not the tragic conclusion, but the necessary beginning of a passage into a new order where renunciation of the self makes affirmation from the other possible, where transforming yourself into an offering of the deity induces the god to

I will now summarize M12, the myth of Rukmāṅgada and Ṛṭsamada, and then using it as an example I will list the occurrence in the narrative of the invariant functions (the term 'function' used in a Proppian sense) which define the transformation from non-devotee to devotee. After Ṛṭsamada has been born, as described above (p. 28), Vācakaṇḍi, though not his biological father, raises him and teaches him the mantra '*gaṇānām tvā*' (36,22). After some time Ṛṭsamada experiences his lack — his non-acceptance as a sage by other brahmanical sages —, confronts his mother about the truth of his birth and curses her. Subsequently a voice from the sky tells him Indra is his true father and then he goes into the forest and begins meditating on Gaṇeśa (37,4). After performing *tapas* for thousands of years Gaṇeśa decides to extend his favour (37,9) to him and manifests himself in his presence, assuming a splendid form consistent with that taken in a *darśana* (37,10-13). Ṛṭsamada receives such a shock that he falls insensible to the ground and wonders why this obstacle (*vighna*, 37,16), as he terms it, has been put in the path of his meditation. Then he asks the god to protect him from this obstacle and requests refuge (37,18). He tells Gaṇeśa the problem concerning his own mixed caste status and then Gaṇeśa reveals himself, saying he has come to confer a favour, and asks him to pick a boon (37,21). Ṛṭsamada is absolutely everjoyed and says that his life has now attained its fruit (*adyamesaphalamjanma...* 37,24). Then he requests his boons:

«...give me the knowledge of Brahman, which is knowledge of the real, and devotion to you which is absolutely rock solid (*tvayi bhaktim casudṛḍhām*)

give you rebirth into this world. The god who breaks you makes you, destruction and creating ultimately spring from the same source. Personal fulfillment comes when personal idiosyncratic attachments give way to acceptance of the transpersonal divine order...»

Putting aside his use of emotive language Courtright's evaluation does have a validity in respect of the transformation of mS. in the myths I have been discussing. Where I would go further is in seeing this process that he describes as reflecting the fundamental transformation that occurs when the status of any person changes from that of non-devotee to devotee, whether or not Gaṇeśa is the object of devotion. Whilst the peculiar feature of violence might be indiosyncratic to the Gaṇeśa myths, the process as a whole is not and has been plotted formally in the *bhakti* semantic framework I have reconstructed for the *Vāmana Purāṇa*.

and which I will never cease to recollect, and the highest position of devotee amongst all your devotees, o Gaṇeśa. O beneficent Gaṇeśa, there is one other boon I request. Give me that special place for your worship which will be capable of attracting the inhabitants of the triple-worlds, which will be famed in the three worlds and which will be worthy of homage from gods and men» (37,29-31).

He then names the Puṣpaka forest as the place he wishes should become famous and Gaṇeśa agrees to give him everything for which he has asked. Finally he makes him the sage of the mantra 'gaṇānām tvā' which he had recited, a position which will give him pre-eminence amongst the sages, thereby liquidating his lack. Further, he predicts he will have a son who will become famous in the triple-world. After this Gaṇeśa disappears and Gr̥tsamada constructs a temple and erects an image of Gaṇeśa there (37,45), and the place is named Puṣpaka. Then he worships the image and at this point the myth ends.

The invariant functions in this myth can be listed in the following sequence:

1. Receipt and application of mantra²⁸.
2. Appearance of object of devotion²⁹.
3. Request for refuge.
4. Object of devotion offers boon.
5. Devotee's statement of merit.
6. Devotee requests boon.
7. Object of devotion grants boon.
8. Performance of devotional acts.

Unlike the model of the transformation from non-devotee to devotee I developed on the basis of a reading of the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, this model only has eight stages, a consideration that reflects the idiosyncratic status of the *GP*. in relation to other *Purāṇas*.

The narrative expression of this formal scheme is not reflected on the syntagmatic chain of the myth right from the beginning.

28. Included in this function is the *tapas* Gr̥tsamada performs in the forest, for although the narrative does not state explicitly that he recited the mantra whilst engaged in *tapas*, it is certainly implied. In most of the other myths in the *Ukh*. it is said that mS. recites the mantra whilst performing *tapas* in the forest.

29. The object of devotion is not to be confused with the mO. in the actantial system, though here and in many other bhakti myths they are the same.

In fact the initial stage of this transformation always begins some way into the myth as the following diagram reveals schematically:



Reading the myth in terms of this diagram, the section between B and C can be considered as the climax of what is narrated between A and B. However, looking first at the actual *bhakti* transformation it should be noted that it contains a climax itself. Stage four of the model marks this climax because it marks a point where the deity (i.e. Gaṇeśa), by offering a boon to mS., has indicated his devotion to mS., thereby acknowledging the devotee status of mS. As such the *bhakti* semantic which produces this transformation works to give further definition to the figure of the mS. by establishing the nature of his relationship with mO., who is the *bhakti* deity. But equally it gives further definition to mO., or, more accurately, it establishes a bifurcation in the expression of mO. between a character (Gaṇeśa) and the liquidation of a lack.

One further observation that can be made from the above diagram is that the first section of the myth (between A and B) is substantially shaped by the first and second semantic frames I have described. This is so because both of them define the mS. as an experiencer of lack, whereas, seen purely in terms of lack and liquidation of lack, the third semantic frame defines mS. in his capacity as one who experiences the liquidation of his lack. However, given that it is essentially a *bhakti* semantic its shaping function extends much further than this. The section of the myth covered by the space between A and B can be regarded as presenting a picture of mS. as a non-devotee, section B-C presenting him as a devotee. Accordingly the *bhakti* semantic frame influences the entire narrative of each myth, even if its narrative expression does not extend over the entire myth. From this perspective the resolution of the problems, i.e. the narrative exemplification of the lack, experienced by mS., must be seen not only in terms of their practi-

cal liquidation, but also in terms of the means of their liquidation and what implication this has for mS.

The transformation of mS. which is plotted by the stages of the *bhakti* model differs from the transformation which occurs when the lack is liquidated. Whilst the liquidation of the lack reflects a transformation in the status of mS., it is often just a case of restoring him to the condition that obtained in his pre-lack situation³⁰. Yet the former induces such a radical change in the status of mS. that at the end of the mythic narrative the liquidation of his lack is of lesser concern than his acceptance of devotee status in respect of Gaṇeśa. And because of this, in total the status of mS. has undergone a profound transformation from what it had been at the beginning of the myth. The liquidation of the lack is still important for the narrative as a whole because (a) it establishes one of the fundamental boundaries of the myth, and (b) because it fulfills the requirements of the didactic intent of the text, namely, to convey the lesson that obstacles (i.e. lacks) can be removed by appeal to Gaṇeśa.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper I cited the only *anukrāmaṇikā* passage which occurs in the *Ukh.* and suggested that the topics it lists are those which the recitation tradition of the *Ukh.* saw as the focus of concern of this text. They constitute a summary of what is meant to be found on the surface of the text. Of the seven topics listed in the *anukrāmaṇikā*, the following four occur in virtually all of the myths in the *Ukh.*: 1) Gaṇeśa's identity, 2) Gaṇeśa's physical appearance, 3) the means of perceiving his appearance, 4) Gaṇeśa's favour. The treatment of these topics is essentially restricted to a single mythic narrative and could simply be handled in the context of a single myth. Yet when this myth (i.e. the mythic plot, as the content differs between myths) is repeated forty times in the one text, the resulting emphasis which is placed on each of these

30. This is not always the case as for example in EM8 where Dakṣa's lack is a lack of a proper body and where his lack is liquidated when he obtains a celestial body. In his case there is no pre-lack situation expressed in the narrative.

topics transcends their individual treatment in each of the myths conceived of as a single unit and so each topic assumes such a high profile in the text that the *anukrāmaṇikā* listing is seen as an accurate statement of the contents of the text and so successfully produces an appearance of cohesion on the surface of the text³¹.

The other three topics, namely, 5) Gaṇeśa's appearance on Earth as an *avatāra*, 6) his previous worshippers and 7) the deeds performed by his devotees which required his intervention, only make sense, as descriptions of the contents of the *Ukh.*, in terms of the entire collection of myths in the *Ukh.* They presuppose the text as a whole and though each represents an individual topic which summarizes a cluster of ideas and motifs, they are topics which entail the repetition of many individual myths. This is not a repetition of many individual episodes purely for the sake of entertainment, rather it is a necessary condition for the production of an image of a deity, that, like several others in Purāṇic literature, is characterized by the possession of many *avatāras*, a characteristic that is most effectively demonstrated by the multiplication of individual narratives about the god, each of which gives one specific example of his *avatāra* role. Further, it dovetails well with the text's didactic function, which is to illustrate with examples the kinds of problems Gaṇeśa can resolve and the means by which he should be approached in order to resolve these problems.

A reading of the *Ukh.* in terms of the topics listed in the *anukrāmaṇikā* points back to the *bhakti* semantic framework as being the dominant semantic influence on the construction of the narrative. Certainly the actantial system is also dominant but its universality in narrative as a phenomenon and its specific syntactic nature gives it a different status from that of the other three semantic

31. Of these four topics three are clustered around the subject of Gaṇeśa's appearance i.e. his *darśana*. The physical self-manifestation of the god is a unique sign to the devotee that he has been accepted as a devotee. Appearances of a *bhakti* god to an individual devotee are unique and transcend all forms of knowledge other than sight. Three factors in the *Ukh.* underlie its fundamental importance as a topic to be communicated in the text: (1) its occurrence in virtually all the myths, (2) the emphasis placed on the incomprehensibility of Gaṇeśa by everything but the devotee's sight, and (3) the many iconographic descriptions of the god in the text given in didactic style.

frames which are culture specific. Each of the semantic frames influences the surface of the narrative by building up the images of the actants and the way the characters who manifest the actantial categories interact in the basic mythic plot implied by the actantial system. The dominance of the *bhakti* semantic can best be realized when the individual actantial categories are correlated with the individual semantic frames as schematized in the following diagram:

ACTANTS

s			mS	mO	mSe	mR	mH	mOb
e	f							
m	r	1	X	X			X	X
a	a							
n	m	2	X					
t	e							
i	s	3	X	X	X	X	X	
c								

One might argue about the accuracy of the precise correlations, but there can be no doubt that the *bhakti* semantic has been the dominant influence on the manifestation of the actants, followed closely by the *karmavipākā* semantic.

Even beyond the dominance of the *bhakti* semantic frame in its correlation with the actantial categories, there is one other way in which it plays a dominant role in respect of at least one other of the semantic frames, namely, the *karmavipākā* frame. The image of Gaṇeśa as mO. from the perspective of this semantic frame is that he is a *karma* remover. But he could not be this, nor would he have any motive for doing this, unless he were firstly an object of devotion, a particular state of being which is determined by the *bhakti* semantic. That is, Gaṇeśa would neutralize the negative effects of *karma* if he were acting in response to a request from a devotee and this situation would be incomprehensible outside of a *bhakti* framework. Similarly he would only be approached for such a request by one who believed him (Gaṇeśa) to be capable of neutralizing the *karma*, and to be willing to do this, and such a one could only be a *bhakti* god. It is in this sense that the *karmavipākā*

semantic builds on the foundation of the actantial system and the *bhakti* semantic frame to produce a narrative situation which gives a precise formulation of a lack which makes full sense within a particular Indian context, the law of *karma* being a basic axiom of Indian thought.

If the arguments about the dominance of the *bhakti* semantic frame in the shaping of the text are accepted (even though I have not been able to demonstrate this in respect of the second semantic frame), it must have priority over the other two semantic frames in terms of text construction and, ultimately, text interpretation. It is likely that to explain the existence of the three semantic frames in the *Ukh.*, it is necessary, as I have done, to distinguish individual purposes for them in the text. Yet it is the *bhakti* semantic that integrates them all on the surface of the text and so ties them together in such a way that produces an underlying cohesion in the content of the narrative. Moreover it is the *bhakti* semantic that ties the *GP.* into the Purāṇic genre, since this particular semantic frame occurs in all the Purāṇas and must be reckoned as one of the defining features of the genre. As for the other two semantic frames they give the *GP.* the singularity which marks it out from other *upapurāṇas* and which unambiguously define it as a text about Gaṇeśa. The second one, which is derived from the myths of Gaṇeśa's birth and his relationship with his parents, firmly anchors the *GP.* into the traditional mythology of Gaṇeśa and results in the retelling of these myths through the medium of the myths in the *Ukh.* which it has shaped. The *karmavipaka* frame lends a kind of hyperbolic realism to the text that allows the point that Gaṇeśa is an interventionist god, even in the smallest things, to be continually stressed. This fulfills the didactic requirement of the Purāṇa as genre.